National Water Availability: U.S. Geological Survey Releases Assessment

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01/24/2025

The United States Geological Survey ("USGS") released on January 16th a document titled:

The National Water Availability Assessment ("Assessment").

USGS describes it as providing a:

…a pioneering scientific overview of water availability that offers first-of its-kind insights into the balance between water supply and demand across the United States.

The Assessment consists of reports which provide a scientific summary and interpretation addressing:

- Water quantity.
- Quality and use.
- Data companions.

In developing the Assessment, USGS indicates that the Assessment differs from previous research which relied solely on data from locations where water was directly measured. This Assessment is described as utilizing state-of-the-art models to fill gaps between monitoring sites. Further, it is stated to have integrated water quality and use which is argued to provide a:

…more comprehensive understanding of water availability.

The period addressed by the Assessment is the years 2010-2020.

Key findings by the Assessment include:

- The U.S. has enough water, but not everywhere and not at all times.
- Water availability is affected by water quantity, quality, and flow.
- Socially vulnerable Americans have a higher risk of water limitation.
- Limited water supply can cause water imbalance.
- Natural and human sources of nutrients degrade water quality.
- Water quality issues can affect human and aquatic health.
- The largest demands for water are for crop irrigation, public supply, and thermoelectric power.
- How we use water varies across the country.

A link to the USGS announcement which contains the Assessment and access to data/models can be found here.